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worth an expenditure of angry feeling as to who shall or who shall not inhabit them. We may as well admit that Washington Territory, and Oregon, and Utah, and New Mexico, are, with the exception of a few limited areas, composed of mountain chains and unfruitful plains; and that, whatever route is selected for a railroad to the Pacific, it must wind the greater part of its length through a country destined to remain for ever an uninhabited and dreary waste.

- ART. IX. — 1. *The Poets and Poetry of America*. By RUFUS WILMOT GRISWOLD. Sixteenth Edition, carefully revised, much enlarged, and continued to the Present Time. With Portraits on Steel from Original Pictures. Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan. 1855. pp. 622.
2. *The Poetical Works of* AUGUSTINE DUGANNE. Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan. 1855. pp. 407.

DR. GRISWOLD'S well-known book appears, in the sixteenth edition, in a form greatly improved, whether we regard the richness of its materials or its mechanical elegance and beauty. It contains ten well-executed portraits, including that of the compiler. The earlier editions of the work included our female poets, whose writings have since been gathered into a separate volume, leaving void room which has been more than filled by their brethren of the gentle craft. Sixteen introductory pages are devoted to the ante-Revolutionary period, while about one and fifty candidates to the honors of Parnassus are brought before us in the residue of the volume. Of each of these we have a biographical sketch, — brief and skeleton-wise for the recent and still living, sufficiently minute to satisfy curiosity for the earlier names on the list. In these sketches we find reason to admire the author's impartiality and kindness. We have been unable to find a single instance in which he has suffered any of the usual grounds of prejudice to warp his judgment or to scant his eulogy, and where it has been his duty to refer to obliquities of temper and con-

duct, he has done so with singular delicacy and gentleness. Under each name he gives us specimens of the author's poetry, more or less numerous, we hardly know by what rule, but we suppose in the compound ratio of celebrity, copiousness, variety of subject and manner, and difficulty of access. Of the greater part of these writers, we thus have, in a compendious form, all that we need or care to know, and from others we cannot regret the paucity of the extracts, while their entire works, or the best of them, are within the easy reach of every reader.

Our colonial existence was by no means fruitful in poetry; or, if otherwise, few found voice through a press both costly and sluggish. The earliest book published in British America was, if not poetry, at least the *travestie* of poetry in verse, namely, "The Psalms, in Metre, faithfully Translated, for the Use, Edification, and Comfort of the Saints, in Public and Private, especially in New England." As afterward revised by President Dunster, with "special eye both to the gravity of the phrase of sacred writ and *sweetness of the verse*," this version became very popular both in America and in Scotland. The following stanza may serve as a specimen:—

"The rivers on of Babilon
There when we did sit downe,
Yea, even then, we mourned when
We remembered Sion."

In the same year (1640) in which the original edition of this work was printed appeared the poems of Mrs. Bradstreet, wife of Governor Simon Bradstreet, a young matron of great loveliness and excellence, of whose verse Rev. Mr. Norton averred, that, "Were Maro to hear it, he would condemn his own works to the fire." Posterity has failed to confirm this glowing panegyric.

The longest original American poem of the seventeenth century was Rev. Michael Wigglesworth's "Day of Doom," written as a "diversion" for weary hours during a period of bodily infirmity, which disabled him for the discharge of professional duty. This work has passed through several American editions, (one quite recent,) and was republished more than once in England. The portion which has been most

frequently quoted is that in which those who died in infancy, remonstrating against the injustice of their fate, have "the easiest room in hell" assigned to them. Notwithstanding the sternness of his creed, the author was characterized by very great amenity and kindness, and among the most genial and tender of amatory documents which have fallen under our notice are the letters by which he wooed and won the Widow Avery to become the wife of his old age. The following passage may furnish a fair sample at once of his poetical merit and of the rhythm which found special favor with our fathers :—

"Still was the night, serene and bright,
When all men sleeping lay ;
Calm was the season, and carnal reason
Thought so 't would last for aye.
Soul, take thine ease, let sorrow cease,
Much good thou hast in store ;
This was their song, their cups among,
The evening before."

As we pass on through the period of the British domination, we trace indeed a larger variety of manner and a closer conformity to good models, yet little meets our eye which exceeds mediocrity, and there are few names which have not been superseded by better on the notoriously palimpsest scroll of fame. We doubt whether the last century produced in America a more genuine poet than the clerical punster, Mather Byles. One of his sacred lyrics, on the Last Judgment, commencing with the stanza,

"When wild confusion wrecks the air,
And tempests rend the skies ;
Whilst blended ruin, clouds and fire,
In harsh disorder rise," —

seems to us unsurpassed in its kind. Our older readers will remember it as having had a place in some of our collections of hymns for public worship ;—that it should have been dropped by recent compilers is, to say the least, as strange as that they should have admitted into the service of the church not a few compositions, sensible and religious, which are no more fit to be sung than the paragraphs of Butler's Analogy.

Until the spirit of resistance to the mother country was roused, little except devotional poetry was attempted in the Colonies. But with the earliest struggles for freedom, there was a sudden outcropping of the double vein of lyric patriotism and of political satire, the former atoning for faults of taste by leaping and stirring melody married to burning thought, the latter seldom free from offensive coarseness, and often shocking the sense alike of decency and of reverence.

But it is not our purpose to attempt a sketch of the history of American poetry. We would rather confine ourselves to a few general remarks on the catalogue of the post-Revolutionary poets given us by Mr. Griswold. The first thought which suggests itself is their multitude, which might probably have been doubled, (perhaps quadrupled by the admission of the other sex,) without essentially lowering the average poetical standard of the volume. More persons, we suppose, write verse in our country, than in the whole world besides. For this there are many reasons. An education sufficient to furnish the vocabulary and to confer the capacity of writing, is attainable by every child in the free States. The honors of the press, too, are within reach of all who can write. No first essay can be so humble, no rhythm so halting, no sentiment so jejune or trite, that it may not find a place and a welcome in some village newspaper, and its circle of admiring readers, on or below its own intellectual plane. In this country, too, hardly any person makes a *specialty* of his calling in life. In the proportion in which a man succeeds in doing one thing, he deems himself capable of doing everything. The most common training for satesmanship is some profession or avocation which would seem to lead away from it. Judges, physicians, and navigators are converted by vote of a corporation into master-manufacturers. The mechanic, tired of hand-labor, takes his place behind the counter, or seeks an office in the customs. The same tendency manifests itself in specially intellectual pursuits. He who earns a place in one guild deems himself free of all. Our college societies can procure fresh poets for every term, and the youth who can frame an oration disdains to confess his inability when asked to be a verse-wright. The school-girl has

her ambition fired by the examination-poems of her seniors, and would feel distanced and disgraced if she too could not make the tripping numbers flow in what to her own unpractised ear might seem euphony. Thus too, in later years, whatever may be the department or the quality of one's fame, if he has any reputation, he deems it essential to its freshness that he should not suffer any direct draft upon his pen to go unhonored, whether the draft be for attack, rejoinder, or diatribe, hymn, ode, or dirge. The very fact, therefore, that so many attempt poetry, renders the success of a considerable number antecedently probable. It is worthy of notice, that on Mr. Griswold's list the proportion is very large of those who are known to the public chiefly as divines, statesmen, or lawyers, and who have written little or no verse beyond the specimens attached to their names.

Moreover, while the genius to which song seems a native and spontaneous language is one of the rarest of endowments, we doubt whether the ability to compose short poems of high artistical merit is by any means rare. The ear for rhythm is more common than that for music. Ten persons can dance well to one that can sing well; and the placing of words in harmonious juxtaposition is a process nearly allied to the exercise of the ball-room. Our language too is affluent in rhymes, and so rich in synonymes as to facilitate in a marvellous degree the invention of rhymes. And there are very few writers of eloquent prose, who do not sometimes give birth to thoughts which need only measure and rhyme to render them genuine poetry. The true bird of song can indeed remain long on the wing without flagging; but for brief periods his aerial path may be tempted by those who, like the flying-fish, the moment their wings are dry, must fall back into their native element.

These considerations may account for the phenomenon happily enough described by Duganne, whose audacity in printing such verses, before he knows whether he is to rise in the public favor above the level of the multitude he commemorates, is worthy of emphatic note:—

“O hapless land of mine! whose country-presses
Labor with poets and with poetesses;

Where Helicon is quaffed like beer at table,
And Pegasus is 'hitched' in every stable ;

Where Gray might Miltons by the score compute —
'Inglorious' all, but, ah ! by no means 'mute.'"

In this connection we cannot but remark the poverty of American literature in long poems worthy of the name. Our country has not yet produced a single epic of even moderate merit. The illustrious Connecticut trio, Trumbull, Dwight, and Barlow, led in this career, and, as they fell by the way, may have blocked up the path for their successors. Trumbull, who essayed the mock-heroic vein, was the most successful of the three. His "Progress of Dullness" is sprightly and harmonious. It had great popularity in its day, and perhaps has ceased to be read mainly because it satirizes follies which the age has outgrown. His "McFingal" owes its decadence, not to a deficiency in genuine wit and humor of the Hudibrastic school, but to the lack of picturesqueness in the story, and of all elements of permanent interest in its heroes. Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan" is smooth and faultless, but inane almost beyond example, and to read it through would be an intolerable penance. Barlow's "Columbiad" has, if possible, still less to recommend it, though its Sahara-like dryness and platitude are sometimes relieved by oases of living green,—too few and brief, however, to allure the traveller to the desert passage. Since Barlow's unfortunate essay, the strictly epic form has seldom been attempted by our poets, and indeed one of them has written a learned and eloquent dissertation to prove that the canon of epic poetry is irrevocably closed, the civilized world having outgrown the *machinery* on which it depends for its artistical completeness and effect. We doubt whether this is strictly true. To be sure, intelligent agencies higher than human and less than divine are no longer at the poet's command ; but their place might be more than supplied by the alliance between man and his Creator of which Christianity is the charter. The fact, no doubt, is, that in these days, when all antecedent fable is exceeded in marvellousness by the realized successes of art and skill, exploits and adventures have declined as to their com-

parative magnitude, events have lost the old grandeur of their epic march, and once august personages have found their more than peers in the general admiration and reverence. The poetry of external life must therefore assume a less stately tone, as in the ballad and the metrical romance; while loftier strains must be reserved for nature, whose beauty and majesty are sempiternal, and for the soul's experiences, rendered always great by its mysterious sources, its hidden being, and its immortal destiny.

Not only in the epic form, but equally in others, is it true that our poets have seldom done much for their fame by their longer pieces. The longer indeed generally owe much of their popularity to the indisputable merit of the shorter; and by these last chiefly will posterity know the authors, if they are to hold a place in the memory of man. The habits of American life are unfavorable to the production of poetical works of a more elaborate kind. Such works demand as much erudition as genius, and they require, too, a concentrated and prolonged attention, to the exclusion of all other aims, — else they are prone to lack continuity and symmetry. But our poets are generally busy men; not a few of those the most largely endowed by nature have had scanty opportunities of study, and a restricted range of reading; and those who have had the highest culture have made poetry their recreation, not their chief pursuit. Then, too, there has been on the part of many an unconscious adoption of Transatlantic sentiment and imagery, in consequence of their superior familiarity with and reverence for the literary masterworks of the mother country. There has at the same time been a lack of courage or of enterprise, which has prevented the free use of our own indigenous materials for song, and has kept invention far below the standard of execution, so that much of our most highly finished verse bears few and slight marks of its birthplace, or of the writer's own individuality.

Our poetical literature is the most affluent in odes and hymns, in poems of sentiment, and in metrical descriptions, not of groups, but of single objects in the realm of nature and of art. The sonnet has been a favorite form with many

of our writers, seldom, however, in its original Italian structure, but with a large license in the adjustment of its parts and rhymes. Jones Very has written some of the best sonnets in our language. Dr. Griswold has given us several of very great beauty from our valued contributors, Henry T. Tuckerman and Henry W. Parker. The following, by William H. Burleigh, breathes the earnest spirit of the reformer; the versification, somewhat rough and rugged, has a solid ring; and the abrupt pauses admirably correspond to the closely compressed thought and the half-smothered vehemence of emotion which characterize the poem.

“THE TIMES.

“Inaction now is crime. The old earth reels
Inebriate with guilt; and Vice, grown bold,
Laughs Innocence to scorn. The thirst for gold
Hath made men demons, till the heart that feels
The impulse of impartial love, nor kneels
In worship foul to Mammon, is contemned.
He who hath kept his purer faith, and stemmed
Corruption's tide, and from the ruffian heels
Of impious trampers rescued perilled right,
Is called fanatic, and with scoffs and jeers
Maliciously assailed. The poor man's tears
Are unregarded; the oppressor's might
Revered as law; and he whose righteous way
Departs from evil, makes himself a prey.”

In point of exquisite finish, the few poems of the late Andrews Norton are unsurpassed, and almost unequalled. The most sagacious critic would find it hard to hint a fault or to propose an emendation. They indicate profound feeling, chastened, yet intensified by a severely fastidious taste, which held emotion in suspense, till it could find the very word which of all others answered to the thought. Their glow is therefore not that of the kindling fire, but that of burning coals on the heart-altar, manifesting the calmness of a sustained fervor, which never flashes or scintillates, and at the same time never wanes or flickers.

If there is any department in which we are ashamed of American verse, it is the burlesque, and especially the comic poetry of low life. Perhaps Hood may have his peers among our countrymen, but, if so, their materials are too near and familiar to be rendered otherwise than coarse and revolting. On the other hand, manners and habits, however homely and displeasing, with which we are conversant only through books or by transient travel, readily admit poetical associations, assume to our fancy graceful forms, and take on something of the romantic element, which alone can redeem grotesqueness from vulgarity.

We cannot go farther in our notice of Dr. Griswold's compilation, without doing ourselves even greater injustice by the omission of names, than we should render to the more eminent by our cursory mention of them, or to the hardly less gifted, but less known, by the impossibility of verifying within our present limits their title to our commendation. We therefore pass to a brief notice of the volume of Duganne, which has come into our hands since we commenced the preparation of this article.

The author satirizes Boston for its ignorance or non-recognition of American literature outside of its own charmed circle. We must plead guilty as regards him; for his name, not absolutely unknown, has not till now attracted our special attention. We ought to have known him better. We learn from Dr. Griswold, that he has been "a voluminous writer in prose," and that the principal pieces in the present collection have been long before the public. They are now gathered in a volume, which to our eye bears the palm of American typography. The preface and the headings of the pages are printed in an antique style of singular beauty, and even the ink has the intense and burnished jetty hue of the best English books a century old, while the paper of the entire work bears a slightly yellow tint, as of decorous age. As a mere specimen of art, the edition by its elegance attests the taste and liberality of the publishers, while its costliness bears witness to their practised sense of the intrinsic worth of its contents. We are inclined, in general terms, to indorse their verdict. We believe the poems, taken collectively, worthy of

the currency and the acceptance thus confidently solicited for them.

The longest of these poems suits our taste the least of all. It is "Parnassus in Pillory," — a bold and reckless satire on American poetry and poets in detail, in which hardly a name is omitted or a fair fame left unchallenged. It is, as regards versification, one of the best American poems of the kind, but seems to us the least kindly, the most malicious, of them all; and they all, in our judgment, while they have "The Dunciad" for their prototype, fail to justify their existence by even a tithe of its brilliant wit, or of its artistical symmetry and grace.

"The Mission of Intellect" is a complex poem, or rather series of poems, in a great variety of measures, and characterized at once by earnest, aspiring, hopeful thought, bold and intense imagery, and highly elaborate and euphonious metrical expression. The following "Apostrophe" is no more than an average specimen of its style and manner; an analysis of its "argument" would demand space which at this late day we are unable to afford.

"O Earth! O beautiful and wondrous Earth!

Jewelled with souls, and warmed with generous hearts!
The morning stars sang gladly at thy birth!
And all God's sons, through Heaven's unmeasured girth,
Shouted with joy! Lo! when thy life departs,
All things created shall surcease, and thou —
Girt with great Nature's wrecks — shalt proudly bow,
And with the crumbling stars bedeck thy dying brow.

"O bounteous Earth! Thy fresh and teeming breast

Hath nourishment for all the tribes of men!
God is still with thee, and thy womb is blest!
Still with abundant good thou travailest!
And thy dead Ages fructify again,
With a new increase! Yet, O Earth! behold, —
Millions are perishing with pangs untold!
Thy children faint, O Earth, for bread reluctant doled!

"Mysterious Earth! Thou hast within thy deeps

The boundless stores of science! The immense
Arcanum of all glorious knowledge sleeps
Within thine arms, and awful Nature keeps

Watch o'er the treasures of Omnipotence !
O mother Earth ! why are thy golden plains
Made fields of torture, and thine iron veins
O'erwrought for weary war, and forged to cruel chains?" — p. 22.

"The Iron Harp" is the name given to a collection of "reform" poems, dedicated to the needs, sufferings, virtues, capacities, and rights of the poor, the toiling and neglected. In these a prominent place, with a whole-souled advocacy, is given to the right of the laborer to free ownership of the soil. What sort of an agrarian law our poet would fain see enacted does not appear. So far as intrinsic fitness is concerned, we could cordially second the plea of his verse in our prose, and have, on a former occasion, expressed our strong conviction that the allotment of freehold estates without price to actual settlers would be the best possible disposal of our public domain, which seems destined to be the prey of unscrupulous speculators, in whatever form it is nominally disposed of by our national legislature. We sympathize with the earnest philanthropy, tender sympathy, and strong faith in man, which pervade, not only this portion, but almost every part of the volume before us. These emotions are evidently sincere and deep. They are a fountain of true poetical inspiration, give terseness and nerve to the verse, and quicken almost every form of versification on a very wide range of subjects into a lyric vivacity and vehemence. They verify their genuineness, also, by seeking expression, to an unusual degree, in the Saxon elements of our complex tongue; for Latinity glances from the reformer's lips and lyre, while the Saxon, as once the language of toil, comes spontaneously to those who would mitigate its burdens and exalt its destiny.

The volume contains not a few poems of a more quiet and gentle strain. Among these we have been impressed with the simple, natural beauty of the "Requiem for a Beloved Child," with which we are compelled to close our extracts and our paper.

"He lies in beauty with our griefs around him, —
So sweetly folded in his snowy shroud ;
As if 't were but a gentle sleep that bound him, —
As if a dream alone our spirits bowed.

“ Ah me ! a sleep that knows no earthly waking, —
A dream that may not flee with morning hours ;
Oh ! blossom of the hearts that now are breaking ! —
It blows no more among our household flowers.

“ Alas ! the Hope, that clung around his being !
The Faith, that traced in light his future years !
The Love, that all his virtues was foreseeing ! —
Must these, alas ! be dimmed with bitter tears ?

“ O no ! the Hope looks upward still to heaven ;
The Faith soars calmly to the realms above ;
The Love, that to our earthly child was given,
Still mingles in his soul with angel love.

“ And, oh ! the years that now our babe has entered !
The virtues clustering round his seraph brow !
How weak our trust that late on earth was centred, —
How sure the promise that sustains us now !

“ This offering, Jesus ! to Thine arms we tender, —
Our child, our babe, our little one, we yield :
Its fragrance, Lord ! to Thee we humbly render, —
Our choicest flower, — the lily of our field : —

“ To bloom beneath thy smile, — to dwell beholding
The wondrous mystery of thy love divine ;
Its beauteous petals evermore unfolding, —
Its opening heart, dear Lord ! so near to Thine !

“ O angel-child ! — O earthly one immortal ! —
Pure messenger from out this world of sin !
Our darling's form hath oped the heavenly portal,
And streams of glory bathe us from within.”

pp. 342, 343.